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## “I’M NOT SURE WHAT THAT MEANS YET, BUT WE’LL SOON FIND OUT” – THE DISCOURSE OF NEWSPAPER LIVE BLOGS

**Keywords:** blogs, live blogs, news, online newspapers, open structure discourse

### Abstract

The following paper focuses on newspaper live blogs. The aim of the analysis is to investigate the structure and discourse properties of this news format. The analysis examines the basic conventions concerning the form and content of these text types, including structural components of live blogs, multimedia, quoting and linking patterns, as well as discourse strategies used to underline “liveness”, interactivity and evaluation. The analysis proves that the discourse of live blogs constitutes an example of open structure news discourse, and reflects a blending of discourse properties typical of blogs as well as of broadcast and newspaper reporting.

### 1. Introduction

Live blogs represent a relatively novel format of news reporting. They constitute “one of the few web-native news artefacts” (Thurman, Walters 2013: 87), an example of a news format developed due to the affordances of the web. As Thurman and Walters (2013: 87) underline, live blogging exemplifies an interesting merger of tradition and novelty in news reporting. Newspapers offer live blogs devoted to different news areas, ranging from politics through economy, to sports and cultural events. Live blogs may be regarded as an ideal text form for newspapers and other news media owing to their focus on the events underway, immediacy of coverage, the feeling they offer of experiencing the news as it “is breaking” and the feeling of “time-space distanciation” (Montgomery 2007: 199) by offering live reports from around the globe.

The arrival of live blogs reflects a further stage in the evolution of blogs marking an increasing popularity of the genre in the mainstream media. Blogs, after more than a decade since their arrival to the web, have developed a number of distinctive features and nowadays constitute an acknowledged and recognisable web-genre (Blood 2002; Nardi et al. 2004; Myers 2010). Due to its appeal and functionality, the genre has also become a conventional component of online newspapers, replacing or supplementing traditional opinion and commentary columns (Jones, Himelboim 2010; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2011).

Though weblogs have already received a lot of attention and a considerable number of studies have been devoted to their form and substance (cf. Niekamp 2007; Stefanone, Jang 2008; Ekdale et al. 2010; Jones, Himelboim 2010; Myers 2010; Garden 2011), live blogs remain a largely under-researched text type. From among the rare studies devoted to live blogging, Thurman and Walters' analysis (2013) deserves mentioning as one of the most recent and insightful. The scholars focused on studying the reception and consumption of live blogs and their research revealed interesting results concerning the audience's approach to this format of news. The aspects which proved particularly appealing to the audience were timeliness, tone, community and participation, curation, and convenience (Thurman, Walters 2013: 95). It was observed that live blogs satisfy readers' expectations of quick updates and a live broadcast provided in a written form. Quite significantly, live blogs are also perceived as more objective than other news reports (Thurman, Walters 2013: 95). Among the negative sides of live blogs, critics underlined the overwhelm of information offered in the blogs, as well as a tendency to blend soft and hard news in the reports, which can make it more difficult for readers to follow the coverage of events (Anderson 2011; Thurman, Walters 2013: 83).

The existing studies of live reporting focused on the issues of production and consumption of news reported in live blogs. The aim of the following analysis is to discuss the most prominent aspects of the structure and discourse of live blogs. The working hypothesis is that live blogs will exhibit a merger of genre and discourse properties of blogs and open structure news discourse typical of television live broadcasts. It is assumed that the main features of discourse will comprise hyperlinking, prolixity, open-endedness and a multi-voiced character. It is hypothesised that "liveness" and immediacy of the coverage will be reflected in the language of the blogs. It is also posited that live reports will exhibit features of increased personalisation, with the presence of attitudinal meanings and conversationalisation, proving an interaction-based nature of live blogging.

The study will involve an examination of the structure and selected discourse properties of the reports. Following Myers' (2010) approach to the analysis of the discourse of weblogs and Montgomery's (2007) theory of open structure news discourse, the analysis will investigate patterns of hyperlinking and quotation, expressions of authorial stance and evaluation, interaction-enhancing strategies, as well as strategies used in the construction of immediacy and timeliness. Since the "tone" of live blogs belongs to one of their most appreciated properties (cf. Thurman, Walters 2013), the analysis of this aspect of live blogs seems crucial to understand their appeal and popularity among the audience.

The material for this analysis comprises hard news live blogs collected over a period of three months (December 2012, January and February 2013) from the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* (56 live blogs in general). The analysed live blogs concern events from the realm of British and international politics and economy.

## 2. "Liveness" and open structure news discourse

The concept of "liveness" has been predominantly associated with audiovisual broadcasting, particularly with television (Montgomery 2007: 118; Huxford 2007: 658). Live transmissions by definition encompass programmes broadcast simultaneously to performance, without previous recording or taping. More specifically, live broadcasting should involve a coincidence of three dimensions: spatial and temporal proximity, i.e. the presence of a reporter at the scene of events at the exact time of events, and broadcast proximity, which guarantees that the news/report was not recorded before and is broadcast live (Huxford 2007: 659). However, it is not only a coincidence of these dimensions that defines live broadcasts. As Montgomery (2007: 118) underlines, "liveness" "indicates more than simple contemporaneousness." Rather, it also involves a specific "condition under which discourse can be produced" (2007: 118). As Montgomery (2007: 118) states, "it is not just the person or the scene that is presented to us live. It is the discourse from the scene or in which the scene is embedded that is live." What defines live news broadcasts is not only simultaneity and co-presence of the reporter and the audience, but also the discourse itself, characterised by a loose frame and lack of fixed script.

With these features, the discourse of news broadcast live exemplifies what Montgomery (2007: 61) calls open structure news discourse. Among the distinctive properties of open structure news discourse Montgomery (2007: 61) identifies: fluid timing, loose framing, prolixity, flow, simultaneity with the event, interpersonal, multi-voiced character, and a flattening of hierarchy in favour of non-studio voice. These features stand against the properties of closed structure news discourse, characterised by fixed timing, tight framing, terseness, presentational/monologic and single voiced character, as well as a completive and summative approach to reporting (Montgomery 2007: 61).

Thus, the differences concern the timing of presentation, framing of news, degree of flexibility, prolixity, objectivity and, most significantly, perspective on the event itself. In open structure news discourse the discourse is more fluid, the degree of informality and conversationalisation is higher, with the focus placed on reporting directly from the field, rather than providing a punctative and retrospective summary of events.

Open and closed structure news discourse forms can be found in such news genres as a live TV two-way or a TV news report, respectively. Open structure news discourse is typical of discourse patterns found in news dedicated television channels which focus on a continuous coverage of news in progress. Live blogs bear a close resemblance to such channels in their focus on covering news underway without

a definite frame or script. Live blogs, analogously to live television news broadcasting, can be set up to run the news continuously until the event in question terminates or its newsworthiness decreases (cf. Montgomery 2007: 60).

### 3. Structure and discourse of live blogs

As stated above, the analysis of the collected live blogs will concern their structure and discourse properties. First, structural components of live blogs will be outlined, followed by a discussion of selected discourse properties, involving among others the degree of interaction, construction of simultaneity and immediacy, and the presence of the personal voice of the reporter.

#### 3.1. Live blogs – structure

Structurally, as Thurman and Walters (2013: 84) underline, live blogs differ from standard forms of news reporting in that they present news as it happens, providing information and analysis of successive stages of the news in question. Consequently, live blogs do not conform to the conventions of story design and the use of the inverted pyramid format.

The structure of live blogs typically comprises the following components: headline, lead or deck, byline, episodes or updates. These components constitute the macrostructure of a report and its three main parts:

- Introduction – general headline; background and context forming lead;
- Main body – episodes, up-dates on the event in question;
- Conclusion – summary of the report.

The updates and single episodes form the microstructures of the report. The updates are published in reversed chronological order, in block format, which is typical of a weblog genre. Each block constitutes an independent structure, but at the same time has to be interpreted as a part of a larger whole. The updates constitute a kind of micro-reports, as each of them focuses on a specific stage of the event, on a different incident associated with the event in question. The episodes represent consecutive stages of the event reported on and enhance a serial character of the reports.

The independent character of each update is additionally underlined by visual means and cues, such as framing devices used to separate the blocks in question. Among the devices, light, dotted or continuous framing lines are the most frequent. Such framing lines mark the transition from one episode to another, dividing the blocks in a delicate, yet meaningful manner (cf. Machin 2007). The form of the frame points to the degree of connection between the episodes – thin dotted lines are used in reports where the updates concern one event and one setting (e.g. UK Politics Live), while thicker continuous lines are used in reports with updates pertaining to distinct scenes of events.

Episode-headlines recurring in the reports constitute another framing device proving an independent character of the updates. Headlines, singled out visually against the background by means of colour and larger print, are used to highlight particularly significant news and draw readers' attention to new stages of the development of the event in question.

Visual cues are also used for two further purposes – to highlight significant content in the updates and differentiate various types of texts within the reports. Information considered important as well as names of actors of the events are underlined visually by bold typeface, while shades of grey are applied to distinguish between the reporter's own text and a quotation. These means add variety to the reports, making the texts more readable and stimulating for the eye.

### 3.2. Multimedia

The reports constitute instances of so-called "multimedia packages" – news stories comprising a combination of textual and audio-visual means of expression. The merger of different codes within a single format adds to the heterogeneity and intersemioticity of the reports. Although the reliance on multimedia is typical of numerous news formats, this property of live blogs is worth noting due to the rate of occurrence of multimedia and their functions. Audiovisuals are characterised by compositional and functional diversity, and comprise videos, charts, as well as photographs, each adding to the meaning of the report in a different way. The following types of visual components proved the most frequent:

- Thumbnail images – components of tweets quoted in the reports and journalists' photographs accompanying reports and/or extracts from opinion columns (identified in all reports, on average 12.3 images per report);
- Images (photographs or film-shots) – identified in all the analysed reports; average frequency of 10.6 per report;
- Videos (short videos from other mainstream media or non-affiliated sources) – present in 86% of the reports, with average occurrence of 2.2 videos per report;
- Info-graphics (charts, tables, maps) – present in 69% of the reports; average frequency of 1.3 per report;
- Podcasts (recordings of interviews and statements) – identified in 18% of the blogs; average frequency of 1 file per report.

Multimedia perform different functions. Thumbnail images are mainly used for decoration and identification of the author. A photograph of this kind enhances the personalisation of the coverage, making the reports more dialogical and interactive. As far as the function of other audiovisuals is concerned, their role as illustration and evidence prevails (cf. Bednarek, Caple 2012: 114–115). Multimedia capture events in progress, illustrate the components of news and help readers to identify them. They constitute evidence of the events reported on, confirm and support the verbal component of the story. The illustrative material does not dominate the coverage, and can be regarded as a complement to the textual layer of the reports. The majority

of the audiovisuals illustrate the same action components to those described in the report, thus exemplifying the relation of overlap between the verbal and the visual (Meinhof 1994: 216–17). The reliance on this relation serves the purpose of underlining the “liveness” of the coverage and simultaneity between the report and event in question. The use of multimedia can be interpreted as a strategy to establish a sense of spatial and temporal proximity to the events, confirm and authenticate the textual layer of the report, giving the reader a feeling of witnessing the events covered. However, since live blogs offer mainly pictures of the actors and/or scenes of events or short videos of randomly selected incidents, their use creates only an “illusion of reporter’s proximity” to the events, and reliance on “virtual proximity” instead (Huxford 2007: 662). Moreover, the multimedia used in reports predominantly involve audiovisual materials extracted from online media websites and news agencies (BBC, AP, Reuters) and social networking sites (e.g. YouTube, Twitter), images and movies from non-affiliated external sources and anonymous participants of the events, which additionally enhances the “illusiveness” of the reporter’s proximity to the events.

By supplying multimedia and underlining the proximity to the events reported on, though only virtual and illusive in nature, reporters can enhance reliability and validity of coverage (cf. Huxford 2007; Zelizer 2010). The incorporation into the blogs of extracts from interviews, speeches, extracts of video-materials recorded at the scene of events forming a backdrop to the reporter’s words, evokes television live two-way transmissions, thus bringing live blogs close to this genre.

### 3.3. Discourse of reports

#### a) Discourse of headlines and leads

Headlines and leads constitute standard components of live reports, a feature they share with conventional news stories. Analogically to a news story, their function in live blogs comprises an informative and persuasive role – they introduce readers to the story and encourage them to follow the coverage (Reah 1998: 13; Rafferty 2008: 231).

Headlines in live blogs exhibit properties conventionally associated with headlines in online newspapers, such as informativity, precision, presence of key words, the use of the present tense, the use of verbless constructions, ellipsis of grammatical words (Kolodzy 2006: 196; Brooks et al. 2008: 256; Ward 2002: 128–129).

Headlines typically have a two-partite form, with one of the components identifying the subject area to which the live blog is devoted, and the second informing on the key event covered in the blog. Headlines include labels such as “live”, “live coverage” or “as it happened”, specifying the “breaking news” format of the blogs.

Leads are used in two major forms: bullet- and block-text formats. Bullet-form leads summarise the most important events occurring throughout the day. The function of leads to set up the story structurally (cf. Bell 1991; Cotter 2010) is of prime importance in this case. Leads provide clues as to the story structure by delineating

successive stages of the development of the event reported on and highlighting the most meaningful issues. Such leads show many properties of headlines outlined above. For example:

Eurozone crisis as it happened: G7 warns of currency war risks

- Confusion over G7 currency comments
- Rajoy says Spain will return to growth in 2013
- UK inflation sticks at 2.7%
- ECB member says banks should pay to wind down rivals
- Draghi praises Spanish reform programme (*Guardian* 12.02.13)

In 16% of the reports, leads were shaped in block-text formats. In these cases the leads do not provide news but rather function as trailers of the events reported on. For instance:

RBS executives quizzed by MPs: as it happened

Royal Bank of Scotland's executives give evidence before the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards. (*Telegraph* 11.02.13)

Both headlines and leads enhance the "breaking" nature of the news and the newsworthiness of reports by highlighting such news values as negativity, conflict, prominence and timeliness (cf. Bell 1991; Cotter 2010). These values are underlined discursively by negative vocabulary, references to emotions, evaluative language, intensification and quantification, as well as the use of the present tense (cf. Bednarek, Caple 2012: 55).

#### b) Opening the report

Opening the report, a conventional component of broadcast news presentation (Montgomery 2007: 41), constitutes a standard constituent of live blog reports. Here it serves the function of identifying the blog and the reporter, punctuation – marking the schedule, and temporal projection of the news presentation (cf. Montgomery 2007: 41). Among the components of the introduction we find:

- A greeting formula and identification of the blog and reporter;
- A summary of previous events – a summary serves to provide the background, the thread of the development of the events so far, and thus facilitate the comprehension of the news to follow;
- An agenda for the report – an agenda presents an outline of upcoming events that will be reported on in the blog.

These components may be present in live blogs in various configurations. For example:

Good morning. Welcome to Middle East Live. Here is a round-up of the latest developments:

Syria: The battle continues to rage in the Damascus suburbs. Yesterday, two mortars fired by rebels exploded close to one of Bashar al-Assad's presidential palaces in Damascus. (...) (*Guardian* 20.02.13)

Good morning and welcome to our live coverage of the global financial markets' response to Friday night's UK credit rating downgrade. Stay with us to get the latest reaction and commentary. (*Telegraph* 25.02.13)

The opening episode introduces the context of the news and events, specifies the focus of the report, and thus may be regarded as a trailer, the function of which is to keep readers' attention and raise their interest in the blog (cf. Montgomery 2007: 41).

#### c) Closing the report

A closing component, conventional in broadcast news (Montgomery 2007: 45), is a standard component of live blogs. Analogically to broadcast news, it may comprise the following components:

- A summary of the events covered – a short review of the major developments during the day;
- A closing formula;
- A trailer informing on future reports.

The closing formula typically comprises a farewell greeting and an explicit closure of the coverage. An important obligatory element in the closing, which occurred in all reports, are thanks addressed at readers for their comments. For instance:

And with that, it's time to close up for the evening. Thanks for all your comments, and we'll be back tomorrow. (*Guardian* 29.01.13)

And with that, we're wrapping up our live coverage for today. Thanks for reading and commenting. (*Telegraph* 07.02.13)

The trailer, anticipating future events and emphasising the reporter's readiness to continue the coverage, is what the reports share with broadcast news. In this case, analogically, they "invoke the dailiness of news and the cyclical nature of the news round" (Montgomery 2007: 48).

Closing and opening formulas involving thanks and leave-taking are particularly meaningful in the context of live blogs as they emphasise an interactional nature of the blogs and reveal the basic rhetorical goal of the reports, i.e. to engage the readers in the coverage, encourage them to make comments and be part of the news at work. These devices signal a strong reader-orientation and a wish to maintain a more direct and personal relationship with readers, a feature distinguishing live reports from other newspaper genres.<sup>1</sup>

#### d) Intertextuality and polyvocality

One of the most prominent features of the discourse of live blogs is their polyvocal and intertextual character. Though the presence of input materials is a characteristic

<sup>1</sup> The frequency of readers' responses in the form of comments confirms the interaction-based nature of the reports and readers' engagement in the interaction. The average number of comments posted by readers amounted to 307,9 commentaries, with the highest number of 724, and the lowest of 124 responses.

feature of news stories in general (Bell 1991; Bednarek, Caple 2012), the frequency, volume and form of the materials distinguish live blogs from other news structures. The amount and integration of input materials is what makes live blogs a clear example of news as "embedded talk" (Bell 1991: 52).

The hybrid and multi-voiced nature of live blogs results from their heavy reliance on hyperlinks and quotations. Direct, indirect, mixed quotes, as well as indirect speech and nested speech can be found in live blogs. Below, we will focus on direct quotations and hyperlinking, since these two forms of inputting external sources are the most conspicuous in the blogs. Incorporation of links and direct quotes constitutes an instance of "manifest intertextuality", where other texts are "explicitly present (...), manifestly marked or cued" in the text (Fairclough 1992: 104).

Direct quotations of sources comprise two parts: the quoted text and the preparatory frame introducing the quotation (cf. Calsamiglia, Ferrero 2003: 156). In the case of quotations, the quoted texts follow the preparatory frame, while in the case of links, the text referred to is "hidden" behind the link. Preparatory frames, i.e. texts introducing the sources and embedding the input material, may take on different structures and perform different functions. The most frequently, analogically to traditional journalistic genres, they comprise the identification of the cited voice, identification of the communicative verb or genre of the quoted text, as well as optional elements such as a summary and/or evaluation of the input material (cf. Calsamiglia, Ferrero 2003: 156). For example:

Speaking to Reuters, Hong-Kong based Bernstein research analyst Michael Werner said: (*Telegraph* 21.06.13)

Karl Whelan, professor of economics at University College Dublin, tweeted that the Irish ministers should heed the data and stop discussing Ireland's 'recovery': "Three quarters in a row of declining Irish real GDP. Any chance government will stop talking about its "recovery"?" (*Guardian* 27.06.13)

And here's the full text of the statement put out by Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary. (*Telegraph* 24.06.13)

Liam Byrne in an article in the Daily Telegraph says that Labour is considering paying higher jobseeker's allowance to the over-50s, as part of its bid to strengthen the contributory principle in welfare. (*Guardian* 24.06.13)

In preparatory frames, typically expressed in the form of indirect speech, bloggers identify the speaker, the context of the utterance, and/or the source of the quotation, summarise the input material or draw attention to the most appealing and meaningful fragments. In this way, the embedding texts serve as trailers of the cited content. However, it is worth underlining that the quotes and links, regarded as instances of synecdoche in referring to a part of the whole (Myers 2010: 36), are selective and may also carry a dose of evaluation and attitudinal meanings. Preparatory frames often contain authors' interpretation concerning the events or the input material:

A flurry of humorous/welcoming tweets... (*Guardian* 22.11.12)

But today's Guardian revelation about the the police using an undercover officer to uncover "dirt" on the Stephen Lawrence family is an absolute shocker. (*Guardian* 24.06.13)

Ed Miliband was quite dismissive when asked about his brother returning to the shadow cabinet yesterday, and, as Dan Hodges has explained in a blog, replacing Ed Balls with David Miliband would bring plenty of problems. (*Telegraph* 03.12.12)

In these cases, the embedding texts contain explicit attitudinal and evaluative meanings. This approach to the input material proves a personalised and interactive approach to reporting.

As far as the type and frequency of the input material is concerned, materials from mainstream media (e.g. news outlets) and public, institutional sources were identified as the most frequent. Average frequency of the sources quoted and linked to is presented in Table 1.

Type of input text	Frequency of links	Frequency of quotes
Number of links/quotes per report	20.6	18.8/128 words per quote
Mainstream media (e.g. Reuters, AP, BBC, newspapers, journalists)	11.5	12.06
Governmental and political sources	5.2	8.5
Independent institutions, organisations (YouGov, Unicef)	3.8	4.8
Personal sources (e.g. homepages, blogs)	3.5	2.1

Table 1. Average frequency of input materials

Mainstream media belong to the most frequently referred to and quoted sources. Unlike other news genres, live reports make numerous references to news published by other outlets, links to news stories, opinion columns and features published by other media companies. Though this approach stands against the natural and widespread competitiveness among news outlets, it may be interpreted positively as a strategy aiming at providing readers with as complete a picture of an event as possible, together with various interpretations of the events.

The bloggers also aim at presenting political decisions, statements and news concerning the government directly from the source, hence a high frequency of input material from governmental sources and websites of political parties.

As mentioned above, the input material is visually highlighted and distinguished from the remaining content by hypertext or, in the case of quotes, by the use of large, prominent quotation marks printed in red and by the use of grey print. Quotes in the *Telegraph* are additionally distinguished by italics, which enhances a personal

character of the statements quoted. Such placement of sources, according to Thurman and Walters (2013: 88), may make it easier for readers to assess the reliability of the quoted materials.

As far as linking to other sources is concerned, it is performed in different ways. The most frequent kinds of linking text have the form of a phrase, title, deictic expression, and a sentence (cf. Myers 2010: 34). The average frequency of the respective types of linking text per blog was as follows:

- Sentence – 10.75 instances per report:

Our market reporter Ben Martin takes a look at how the hope of more economic stimulus from the US Federal Reserve has helped London's blue-chips shrug off Friday's credit rating downgrade. (*Telegraph* 21.02.13)

Cathy Newman in the Daily Telegraph says that sexism is rife at Westminster. (*Guardian* 26.02.13)

- Phrase or clause – 7.08 uses per report:

The Vatican Radio website has the full text of the pope's statement today. (*Guardian* 31.01.13)

Here's EU President Herman Van Rompuy's letter to leaders from the 27-nation bloc asking them "not to forget the bigger picture" in the midst of Thursday's "difficult, lengthy and messy" budget talks. (*Telegraph* 21.02.13)

- Deictic expression ('here', 'this') – 3.75 per report:

For more on the Italian election, see our full story here. (*Telegraph* 25.02.13)

Miliband was referring to this report. (*Guardian* 30.01.13)

- Title/name – 2.5 instances per report:

My colleague Ami Sedghi has gathered all today's unemployment statistics into a new Datablog post. (*Guardian* 08.01.13)

The Wall Street Journal also has an interview with Cuadrilla's Francis Egan (*Guardian* 13.12.2012)

As shown above, sentences, clauses and phrases used as links are particularly frequent. The linking text is assimilated within the text of the report, thus simultaneously performing the function of a reference and providing a synopsis or review of the content behind the link.

Links and quotes the most frequently have the function of crediting sources of news, confirming the news and providing further information or details on the events happening, lending additional background and context to the news. Providing original sources, conventional in news reporting, lends more transparency to journalistic practice and may be seen as an attempt at increasing the level of objectivity and breadth of coverage (cf. Singer 2005; Montgomery 2007: 170), at leaving

readers room for interpreting the news and events on their own (Le 2003). More often, however, input materials comprise opinion statements, comments, evaluations and various perspectives on the events. The abundance of opinion sources proves that it may not be the events that are of primary importance in live blogs, but it is reactions and interpretations of the news that are ascribed more value and meaningfulness (cf. Montgomery 2007: 86). The links and quotes may thus constitute an important persuasive tool for reporters – the selection of references may serve as additional means of influencing readers' opinions and directing them towards a preferred interpretation of the events (cf. Le 2003).

The rate of occurrence of quotations and links constitutes a sign of a deeply intertextual nature of live blogs. Reports “become a thing of many voices” (Montgomery 2007: 147), a collection of quotations, direct and indirect references to sources and extracts from texts. Owing to a heavy reliance on external materials, live blogs offer a somewhat fragmented picture of events, composed of reports, comments and witnesses' accounts, with the reporter acting as a moderator and intermediary who brings different voices and accounts into a whole (cf. Montgomery 2007: 60). The abundance of quotes visibly contributes to an increase in the level of genre hybridisation within the reports. The quoted texts introduce to the reports such genres as an interview, debate, report, news story, a feature article, or a comment. Moreover, a high frequency of quotes of spoken messages and posts from online channels increases the level of stylistic heterogeneity, conversationalisation and informality. The use of Twitter quotes (9.8 tweets per report) is particularly meaningful and worth noting in this context. The quotation of tweets brings into the reports features of the language typical of social media and Twitter in particular – the use of hashtags, abbreviations, elliptic structures, spoken, evaluative and expressive language. A high frequency of quotes from Twitter proves an increasing role of this medium in reporting and disseminating news and opinions (Hermida 2012; Murthy 2013). In live blogs, tweets are quoted to provide an immediate commentary to breaking news, an instantaneous interpretation of the events covered even before they terminate.

e) The news at work – means underlining the “liveness” of the reports

Live blogs constitute an interesting example of news programmes transmitted “live” in a textual form. Therefore, means underlining the immediacy and freshness of the coverage are worth noting. The blogs uncover news as it happens, as well as the process of collecting information and following the events as they occur.

Among the most frequent and noticeable means of constructing the “liveness” of the blogs, references to time should be mentioned. An exact time of posting each episode is provided, which is a typical feature of a breaking news format. Marking the exact time underlines a topical and “minute-by-minute” nature of the coverage. The immediacy of the coverage and the open-ended nature of reports are also highlighted by specific tense choices and a range of time adverbials. The blogs offer a “live” view of the situation and events underway – bloggers report on the events at the scene, report on “what they see and hear”, thus giving readers a clear and detailed view of the situation. To report on actions taking place at the moment of

reporting, reporters resort to the present simple tense, the use of which is typical in live commentaries (Quirk et al. 1985; Pérez-Sabater et al. 2008), and the present progressive, underlining an extended duration of the event described, as well as the present perfect to emphasise actions completed in the recent past. The "liveness" of the report and the instantaneous coverage of events is additionally marked by adverbials, such as *just, now, at last* (identified in 82% of the reports, with average frequency of 6.08 adverbials per report). For example:

Steve Webb, the pensions minister, is making his statement now. (*Guardian* 14.01.13)

Teather is still speaking. (*Guardian* 08.01.13)

George Osborne stands up. Here we go. (*Telegraph* 26.06.13)

Just in: the eurozone unemployment rate has hit a new record high of 11.8% in November, up from October's 11.7%. (*Guardian* 08.01.2013)

Time references in the quoted examples clearly signal "nowness" (cf. Myers 2010: 69) and enhance the impression that readers may have of following the news as it happens. Time references underline the immediacy of coverage and the topicality of the news, as well as the newsworthiness of the events – the news value of timelines in particular (cf. Myers: 2010: 69; Bednarek, Caple 2012: 55). The forms mark the fluid and quick flow of events, lack of completeness and closure of events, unpredictability, openness for further development and interpretation.

In live blogs the process of assembling and disseminating information is uncovered and explicit. The flow of information, all the blogger's/reporter's actions and decisions are visible and often explicitly described. The most often this is where the "I" of the reporter or "we" of the news agency becomes visible, which marks a personal character of the blog and an interaction-based nature of reporting. Self-references occurred in 85% of the blogs, with average frequency of 7.3 instances per report. Bloggers inform readers on their actions, on the sheer process of news gathering and reporting. For example:

I've now got hold of some photos from Athens, where union members broke into the office of the labor minister, and were then ejected by riot police. (*Guardian* 30.01.13)

I can't put it off any longer. I'm afraid it's time to start writing about the government's plans for a single-tier pension. (*Guardian* 14.01.13)

"Limiting the scope of the state and extending freedom." I'm not sure what that means yet, but we'll soon find out. (*Guardian* 07.01.2013)

We are getting a lot of contradictory reports from Algeria that we cannot yet confirm. (*Guardian* 17.01.13)

Similarly, various forms are used to anticipate news and events, e.g. specific tense forms, time adverbials and/or conjunctions. The statements below function as trailers

outlining the future development of the report and may create a set of expectations as to the progress of the report:

We'll come back to Hariri and hear more from him later today. (*Guardian* 01.02.13)

I'll file more details as I get them. (*Guardian* 07.01.13)

If you want to hear every word of Carney's testimony, we'll be showing a live stream of the meeting at the top of this page. It'll go live at 0945. (*Telegraph* 07.02.13)

The above-mentioned examples reflect an open-ended and fluid nature of reports, express a dynamic pace of coverage and exemplify the phenomenon of "news at work". The user may gain an insight into the process of collecting sources and composing a news report.

Actuality and immediacy are established by providing news directly from the place of events and emphasising "that the news gathering is close to the sounds and sights of the event" (Montgomery 2007: 64). On the level of discourse this is reflected in introducing reports from affiliated or non-affiliated journalists or other sources located at the scene of events, as well as in highlighting the transition between different places of events covered (instances of which occurred in 46% of the reports, with average frequency of 3.8 instances per report). Transition points in discourse are marked in ways analogical to live television broadcasting, with expressions such as:

Another snippet from our watchful Brussels correspondent while he waits for the delayed meeting to get going (*Telegraph* 21.02.13)

Back to Germany, where Deutsche bank posted a surprise net loss of €2.2bn for the fourth quarter. (*Guardian* 31.01.13)

Over to Italy, where the factory sector continued to contract but again, at a slower pace. It was, in fact, its slowest pace since last March. (*Guardian* 01.02.13)

The use of adverbial phrases in the initial position reinforces facticity (Montgomery 2007: 64), enhances the dynamism and breadth of coverage. These means reveal the progress of the events, the process of unfolding the news and bringing them together in the flow of reporting. The abundance of interpolations presenting events happening simultaneously underlines the "liveness" and comprehensiveness of the reports. These patterns evoke transitions between studio speakers and reporters located in the field used in television news presentations. In live blogs they are used to introduce an insider perspective on the events and thus bring the scene of events closer to readers, enhancing the impression of spatial proximity to the events.

The transitions also involve changeovers between reporters covering the news. Live bloggers may change shifts in reporting and hand over the blog to other journalists, which guarantees the maintenance of a fluid and uninterrupted coverage. In these cases, the use of conventional phrases found in broadcast reporting can be observed, but instances of more informal, colloquial expressions, marking familiarity and directness, were also identified:

I am now handing over the blog to my colleague Rebecca Clancy, who will be following Osborne as he appears in the Commons and in front of the Banking Standards Commission, as well as all the reaction, and other news in Europe. (*Telegraph* 25.02.13)

I'm handing over to my colleague Rachel Cooper to take you through the rest of the summit, which, yes, is still going. (*Telegraph* 21.02.13)

I've got to scoot now, so Nick Fletcher is your host. Cheers all. (*Guardian* 03.01.13)

The above-quoted instances reflect a lack of script and a more open-ended form of discourse, its development together with unfolding news, as well as a personal character of the blog. The strategies mentioned above underline the pace of news as it develops, simultaneity of the events happening around the globe, and the dynamism of the events.

#### f) Reporter voice – evaluation and subjectivity

Preliminary analysis proved that various patterns of evaluative meanings can be found in live blogs. Owing to a considerable complexity of these patterns, evaluation and stance in reporters' voices deserves an analysis of its own. Below, only the most conspicuous forms of evaluation are presented. The means of expressing stance in live reports are discussed according to Myers' (2010) analysis of stance in blogs.

Live bloggers do not refrain from expressing attitudinal stance, personal evaluations concerning news and events reported on. Instances of evaluation of states of affairs and entities using a range of discursive strategies occurred in 80% of the analysed reports (average frequency of sentences containing an evaluative expression was 16.25 per report). In the examples below, intensification of attitudinal meanings is expressed on the lexical level by means of vocabulary with evaluative connotations:

After Nick Clegg's first LBC phone-in, which was a bit dull, I thought this was going to become a tedious Thursday morning chore. But today it was good (in the sense of generating some useful news lines). (*Guardian* 31.01.13)

This will be a relief after gloomy retail sales figures out this morning (see 7.48am). The jobless figures are arguably more significant than the volatile retail sales data, and show up the stark contrasts between different European member states. (*Guardian* 31.01.13)

Reporters resort to straightforward evaluation in plain and simple terms (using adjectives such as *dull*, *good*, *gloomy*, etc.). Evaluation of economic and political affairs using such terms, uncommon as it may be, enhances an informal and more relaxed tone of reports, which readers may find more appealing (cf. Thurman, Walters 2013).

Evaluation concerns not only the affairs covered but also events anticipated by the bloggers. In the cases below, by means of evaluative meanings, reporters direct readers' attention to incoming events:

Carney's appearance isn't the only excitement on the horizon today. (*Telegraph* 07.02.13)

MPs will soon begin debating the proposed parliamentary boundary changes. Technically it's a three-hour debate on Lords amendments to the electoral registration and administration bill, but don't be put off by the title. It should be a cracker. (*Guardian* 29.01.13)

My prediction is that they won't have thought it through or costed it properly and we'll discover over the course of the day all sorts of problems and issues with a policy that looks like it's been cobbled together overnight. (*Guardian* 14.02.13)

Markers of concession, modal verbs, evaluative vocabulary all signal a tentative evaluation of the course of events and mark the blogger's perspective and interpretation of the news, epistemic and attitudinal stance (Quirk et al. 1985: 1183; Myers 2010: 95–110).

Instances of expressions showing reporters' emotional reactions, though rare, can also be noticed in the reports (identified in 18% of the reports, average frequency of 1.5 instances per report). Such attitudinal meanings usually comprise comments of a meta-textual character, associated with the sheer process of reporting and technicalities of the blog:

I'm sorry I'm late launching this. We've had technical problems in the office. (...) Hurray! Our tech problems seem to be over. I have not been able to post for the last hour, but with luck I should be back to normal now. (*Guardian* 30.01.13)

Once again, I'm sorry we had to turn the comments off today. (*Guardian* 25.02.13)

These instances are worth noting since they confirm the informality and an interaction-based nature of the blogs.

Bloggers' attitude is reflected in traces of irony, examples of which were also found in the reports (identified in 26% of the reports, average frequency 2.2 per report). For instance:

LaPierre's logical jujitsu: Since criminals don't follow laws, no new law would work, because criminals break laws, so laws won't work, because criminals by definition break laws, so we shouldn't resort to laws as a way of restraining criminals, who habitually disregard laws. (*Guardian* 30.01.13)

This is rich.

Limbaugh: "You're seeking compromise; Obama is seeking political victory."

Rubio: "Yeah. I just want to remind everybody that Obama won't be president forever." (*Guardian* 29.01.13)

So Mark Carney might be the rock star/George Clooney (delete as appropriate) of central banking, but what does he actually think? (*Telegraph* 07.02.13)

These examples reveal a playful, light and informal tone of the blogs. They comprise a straightforward evaluation and interpretation, expressed in a jocular fashion, which can make the report more appealing to the audience.

The degree of authorial presence and the range of strategies used to express attitudinal meanings distinguish live reports from conventional print news stories. Montgomery (2007: 122) underlines that the intrusion of stance and evaluation is typical of television live broadcasting and makes it different from other news discourse patterns. The occurrence of stance markers, of commentative and reactive elements is yet a further proof of the correspondence of live blogs to television live broadcasting and of the open structure discourse pattern in the blogs.

Self-mentioning, making the "I" of the blogger visible through attitudinal meanings and emphatic language is regarded as a sign of involved discourse (Biber 1988: 106). As such, it enhances the degree of personalisation, but it can also be seen as a sign of reader-orientation, of an interactional character of the discourse and a more direct relationship with readers.

#### g) Interactional elements

The interactional and dialogic nature of live blogs is a further feature signalling their open structure. The interaction-based character of the blogs is expressed through phatic elements including the use of informal language and calls for interactivity (cf. Cotter 2010: 130). The authors of live reports do not only mark their presence, but also explicitly acknowledge the presence of readers. Among the most frequent interaction-enhancing elements, self-mentioning and direct references to readers by means of personal pronouns can be found. By using personal pronouns, comprising the inclusive *we*, bloggers stress the relationship and common ground existing between them and readers:

We've had a bit of a break, so let me bring you up to speed on recent events. (*Telegraph* 02.01.13)

As we await news on details, let's take a look at how the current budget is spent and by whom. (*Telegraph* 21.02.13)

The most frequent explicit references to readers by means of the personal pronoun *you* are used in indirect textual and physical directives (Hyland 2002: 216). Such forms were identified in all live blogs, with average frequency of 3.7 references per report. In the examples below reporters direct readers to additional external sources concerning the events covered or news in general, or instruct readers on the technical aspects of the blog:

If you are looking for some lunchtime reading to keep you busy while you enjoy your sandwiches, you can read the Inflation Report in full here. (*Telegraph* 13.02.13)

You can watch the exchanges here. (*Guardian* 30.01.13)

Bigger version if you click on the twitpic link. (*Guardian* 14.02.13)

However, more interesting examples of interaction can also be found, where authors enter into a playful interaction with readers. This can be exemplified by directives intended humorously as well as by paralinguistic elements, which create an impression

of a conversational interaction with readers being in progress, in which some action or statement is ascribed to readers (cf. Myers 2010: 84). These elements were identified in 69% of the blogs, with average frequency of 1.5 instances per blog. For instance:

It means there are two central bank governorships up for grabs, while Ben Bernanke's term at the Federal Reserve ends in 12 months time, so get those CV's polished! (*Guardian* 29.01.13)

At which point prime minister Romano Prodi left office to be replaced by... (yup, you've guessed it). [a picture of Silvio Berlusconi following] (*Guardian* 07.01.13)

Welcome back to our live coverage of the global debt crisis. Oh yes, we're still here. (*Telegraph* 02.01.13).

Such devices suggest a humorous spoken interaction, "set a joking tone, a shift from writing to mock conversation" (Myers 2010: 112), by which reporters bring readers closer, recognise them as participants in the discourse and create an impression of a direct face-to-face contact, of an informal, entertaining interaction between them. The use of interactional elements may help activate readers and engage them in the coverage.

The strategies evoke a spoken-mode and reflect a considerable degree of orality and informality of the discourse of live reports. This property was also underlined by previous studies of live blogging (Pérez-Sabater et al. 2008; Thurman, Walters 2013). Traces of informal language and spoken-mode devices can be found on the level of syntax and vocabulary and comprise the use of long paratactic clauses, of clauses beginning with conjunctions (*but, and*), ellipsis, suspension points as well as the use of colloquialisms, informal vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and phrases, exemplified in the extracts provided.

The reliance on the spoken-mode, informal language and interactional elements may serve a phatic function and proves an interaction-based nature of the blogs – it may bring readers closer, enhance conversationalisation and signal identification with average readers. The use of such devices lends a less serious, more vivid tone to the news, thus making it easier and more enjoyable for readers to follow the coverage. It may also be interpreted as a sign of identification with readers, expression of a more distanced, average man-in-the-street's perspective on the world of economics and politics. Colloquialisms, however, may serve an expressive function as well, constituting additional means of evaluation of the news.

#### 4. Conclusions

Live blogs represent an interesting example of a novel news format, reflecting a merger of conventions used in broadcast and web-based news storytelling as well as in blogging. With their episodicity, open-endedness and lack of script, expression of personal voice and reliance on the spoken mode, live blogs exhibit many properties of open structure news discourse and a live TV two-way report.

Similarly, the emphasis on immediacy and facticity, the elements of structure, such as headlines and leads, openings and closings, as well as multimedia backdrops, all evoke broadcast news. What live blogs share with online news storytelling and blogging is the reliance on linking, focus on interaction, user-feedback and participation. Polyvocality, reliance on affiliated and non-affiliated sources, prove a de-centred nature of live blogs and the focus placed on gathering news from the field. The blogger's role, analogically to a TV live two-way, is "less scripted, more improvised, more a question of blending together in the real time flow of broadcasting, the voices that are drawn upon to make up the news" (Montgomery 2007: 61). The news is unfolded through quotes, comments, references to mainstream and social media, thus composing a specific, detailed and informative, but in a way fragmented picture of events.

The discourse of live blogs is a combination of the properties characterising the discourse of blogs and of broadcast and newspaper news reporting. The main properties of the discourse can be grouped around the following areas:

- Open-endedness and spontaneity of expression – the discourse reflects the topicality of news, an unfolding and fluid nature of events, with a range of forms underlining the "live" character of the coverage present in reports;
- Intertextuality and polyvocality – the discourse is multi-voiced, multi-referential, heterogeneous and collaborative, involving user- and other reporter-interaction; Intertextuality is associated with multimodality, a merger of different modes and channels of expression within the reports (textual, audiovisual modes; genres; channels, e.g. Twitter);
- Stylistic heterogeneity – the reports reflect a blending of formality and informality, resulting from intertextuality and genre heterogeneity;
- Description and interpretation – a combination of reporting and interpretation, the presence of statements of fact and of possibility can be seen in reports; a merger of institutional and personal voices, presence of evaluative meanings;
- User-orientation – reports are dialogical, interactive and conversational.

The discourse of news live blogs is the discourse of intertextuality, interaction and dialogue, which may be seen as a further evidence of the personalisation and conversationalisation of public discourse (Montgomery 2007: 179). Informality and stance markers strengthen interactivity, which, together with an emotional charge, make up the extraordinary tone of the blogs and distinguish live reports from the reporting formats used online so far.

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